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ABSTRACT

The document reports the Alabama component of Project IEP (individualized education program), a project designed to identify and clarify perceptions related to roles in the IEP process as mandated by P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. It is explained that under Project IEP approximately 200 persons (including state and local education administrators, regular and special teachers, parents of handicapped children and the children themselves, support personnel, and advocacy groups) were given open-ended interviews. Findings and suggestions are reported for the following areas: parental roles (reasons for active parental participation in the IEP process and barriers to parental participation); teacher roles (increased demands, need for further training, and effects on morale and interstaff relationships); administrator roles; and local, state, and federal relationships (respect for state and local autonomy, standardization, and federal provision of funds). Listed among IEP Panel recommendations are that appropriate and comprehensive pre- and in-service training should be based on local input; that training should be provided for parents; that parents should be accompanied by an advocate during the IEP conference if they so desire; and that paperwork should be minimized. (SBH)

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Project IEP

ALABAMA STATE REPORT

EC 120 497

Project IEP was a joint effort of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, U.S. Office of Education and Nero and Associates, Inc., in cooperation with the Program for Exceptional Children and Youth, Alabama State Department of Education.

PROJECT IEP: ALABAMA STATE REPORT

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PROJECT IEP: SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Andalusia City
Bibb County
Birmingham City
Elmore County
Franklin County
Huntvsille City
Montgomery City
St. Clair County

PREFACE

In November, 1975, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. The central focus of this legislation is the right of each handicapped child to a free, appropriate public education. A key mechanism for assuring such an education is the provision of an individualized education program, or IEP. The IEP is to contain the following components:

- a statement of the child's current level of performance
- a statement of annual goals and short-term objectives
- a statement of intended services
- a statement of extent of participation in regular education
- a statement of dates of initiation and termination of services
- a statement of method, criteria, and schedule for evaluation of child's progress based on the prescribed goals and objectives

The IEP is to be developed in a meeting attended by a local school administrator, the child's teacher, the child's parents, and, when appropriate, the child.

The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped of the U.S. Office of Education is the federal administrative unit charged with facilitating the implementation of this law. It became apparent to Bureau staff members that different people across the nation who were responsible for or affected by the IEP requirement had varied perceptions of the federal mandate and their roles in the IEP process. These perceptions are important because the way people perceive their roles and the roles of others can

be expected to determine how they will implement the process and how they will communicate with others. Clarification of different perspectives was considered an important step in identifying potential barriers to implementation of the law and exploring strategies to facilitate successful implementation.

To identify and clarify perceptions related to roles in the IEP process, the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped sponsored Project IEP. The methods used in this project were specifically designed to solicit the insights and perspectives of those most directly affected by the IEP process. Four states, Alabama, New Jersey, Washington, and Wisconsin, participated in Project IEP from February to May, 1977. In each state, approximately 200 persons were interviewed using open-ended interviews conducted in respondents' homes, offices, or classrooms. Those interviewed included state and local education administrators, regular and special teachers, parents of handicapped children and the children themselves, support personnel, advocacy groups, union representatives, and others.

In May, a clarification forum was held in each state. Of the 150-200 people interviewed in each state, individuals representing diverse experiences and opinions were invited to offer their comments regarding implementation of the IEP at their respective forums. Thus, the forum provided an opportunity for these groups and individuals to share their experiences and clarify their concerns regarding implementation of IEPs within the state.

Twelve individuals whose backgrounds were similar to those of the respondents served on a panel that listened to the information presented and made recommendations about priorities and suggestions for implementing IEP requirements. These recommendations were shared with state education agency personnel and are included at the end of this report.

Comments offered at the four state clarification forums dealt with anticipated changes in the roles and relationships of individuals and organizations. Particular attention was given to anticipated new responsibilities and their potential impact on existing responsibilities as individuals and organizations begin to respond to the IEP mandate.

The report which follows presents information synthesized from the interviews and clarification forum held in the State of Alabama. Although it was felt that the use of an open-ended, less structured interview technique would produce more in-depth, accurate information, this technique also makes the reporting of findings in terms of percentage of respondents virtually impossible. Thus, in the pages that follow, statements referring to "many" or "most" teachers, parents, and others may be interpreted as referring to a majority of respondents in the designated group unless otherwise indicated. Some comments of particular individuals are also included to exemplify or further explore certain points mentioned often during the study. The information presented in this report may be viewed as transient, since perceptions may be expected to change with time and experience. However, the data was collected just prior to the mandated date of IEP implementation, October 1, 1977. Thus, the report should be viewed as a documentation of initial perspectives and suggestions. In the future it may serve as a reference point against which to measure changes in perceptions and changes in our efforts to provide individualized education for handicapped children.

ALABAMA STATE REPORT

Practice Prior to Implementation of PL 94-142

Prior to implementation of PL 94-142, special education in Alabama was regulated by the Alabama Exceptional Child Act (No. 106) of 1971. The Act states that exceptional children between the ages of 6 and 21 are eligible to receive not less than 12 years of "appropriate instruction and special services...at public expense." Eligibility for these special services was determined by an Admissions Review Committee (ARC) in each school system which made decisions regarding special education admissions and withdrawals and reviewed pupils' files to determine if there was a need for retesting and/or continuation of special educational services. Personnel participating as ARC team members included local coordinators of special education, educational diagnosticians, special and regular classroom teachers, and principals.

The state statute stopped short of PL 94-142 which, in addition to providing for a free, appropriate public education for handicapped children, also mandates that a team including the teacher, an administrator, the parent(s), and when appropriate, the child, design an individual education plan (IEP) for every handicapped child. Thus, under the federal law, the child's education becomes a joint responsibility to which each participant is expected to contribute, rather than an entirely school-based responsibility. Because the federal law does not specify the roles that various individuals are to assume or who is responsible for assigning these roles, there is considerable question in Alabama regarding what roles are appropriate for particular

people, what changes in existing roles will occur as the law is implemented, and what problems may arise as a result of these role changes.

To investigate and clarify peoples' perceptions about these issues, Project IEP case analysts and their teams of interviewers interviewed approximately 173 regular and special teachers, school principals and other administrators, representatives of advocacy groups, institutional staff, support personnel, State Department of Education and teacher training personnel, parents and handicapped children in eight school districts throughout the state of Alabama. A sample of the respondents testified before an audience of approximately 300 at the Alabama Clarification Forum in May, 1977. This report attempts to structure the information acquired during the interview stage of the project and at the Forum. For the sake of clarity, information has been organized around the changing roles of parents, teachers, and administrators, and around the changing relations between federal, state, and local governments as a result of the IEP requirements of PL 94-142.

Each of the sections of this report includes a description of practices in Alabama prior to implementation of PL 94-142; capsule statements of the principal reactions to the IEP requirements of PL 94-142; a perspective section amplifying the capsule statements, and a summary section which includes the best practice recommendations. At the end of this report is a summary of recommendations made by the Clarification Forum Panel.

Parental Roles

The issue of parental involvement in educational programming in Alabama is a complex one. Although the state law does not require parental

participation, most teachers have tried to get parental approval for programming decisions. All school personnel interviewed stated that they value parental input. However, a few parents felt that their wishes and feelings about their handicapped children had been too long ignored by educators. Now that PL 94-142 assures interested parents the right to participate in their child's educational planning, educators will be required at a minimum to obtain parental consent for the child's program and hopefully will encourage parents to actually participate in designing the child's program. Because practice prior to implementation of PL 94-142 ranged from a simple signed approval procedure to active participation in programming, the appropriate nature and extent of parental participation in the IEP process has become a subject of much concern. Respondents pointed out advantages to parental participation as well as expected problems.

Summary of Reactions to the IEP Requirement of PL 94-142

Reasons for Active Parental Participation in the IEP Process

- Parents can provide background information on the child's health, habits, likes and dislikes, ambitions, educational history, etc., and can reinforce at home what is being taught at school.
- Active participation can lead to greater understanding on the part of school personnel of the "whole" child, enhanced communication between parents and school personnel, and an increased commitment on the part of the parents to obtaining a better education for their handicapped child.

Barriers to Parental Participation in the IEP Process

- Many parents express a lack of knowledge regarding the child's true needs and abilities.

  Some parents feel intimidated by the school system.

- A few parents believe that a child's education is the responsibility of the school system and that they should not become involved.
- Some educators are concerned that some parents have unrealistic expectations for their child or harbor a belief that the child cannot learn; also, some parents do not acknowledge the child's handicap.
- Services to the child may potentially be delayed while the school attempts to notify parents and obtain their consent.
- Involving working parents in the process sometimes requires evening or weekend meetings.
- Some teachers and administrators have begun to question whether the potential value of parental participation is outweighed by the cost of the notification and consent procedures.

Reasons for Active Parental Participation in the IEP Process

Although parental involvement in the past has varied as a consequence of both school and parent interest and initiative, more parents are becoming aware that, as a result of PL 94-142, they have a legal right to actively participate in their handicapped child's education. Respondents indicated that the possible range of parental involvement might include providing information about the child, reinforcing the child's learning at home, and assisting in the development of the IEP. Parental involvement would thus provide the school with an increased understanding of the child's handicapping condition and home environment, provide parents with increased understanding of their local education system, and provide continuity between efforts to help the child at home and at school.

Barriers to Parental Participation in the IEP Process

The major problems concerned with the changing role of parents as a result of their particiaption in the IEP process appear to be the

same ones that existed in Alabama before the passage of PL 94-142. They are (a) lack of parental knowledge of the IEP process and special education in general and (b) the extensive amount of time required to involve parents in the process in a meaningful way.

According to school personnel, many parents lack the knowledge, skills, or interest needed to participate in the process effectively. Some parents are particularly intimidated or offended by the professionals' use of jargon and test data which are unfamiliar or confusing to them. Also, some parents, particularly those from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds, are reluctant to participate because they are intimidated by the school system, and would be reluctant to object to certain decisions even if they felt qualified to do so. Another concern is that parents may not be aware of the child's true needs or abilities, or may have attitudinal problems such as believing that the child cannot learn or refusing to acknowledge the child's handicap.

Many working parents find it difficult to attend conferences at school. Others are unable to participate because they lack transportation or reliable care for children remaining at home. Thus, the logistical difficulty of involving parents in the IEP process in a useful and meaningful way sometimes places a burden on school personnel. A particular concern is that services to the child may be delayed while the school is attempting to notify parents or obtain their consent. The consequences of this situation include increased costs and time delays. The benefit of notification and consent requirements is sometimes questioned by teachers and administrators when weighed against these costs. If working parents are to participate actively in the process, it may be necessary for teachers and other school personnel to devote

their personal time during evenings and weekends resulting in increased costs in terms of professional time expended and decreased staff morale.

Summary and Suggestions

Although it is recognized that the parents, the child, and the school may benefit from increased parental participation, many problems are associated with it. Parents, who are likely to be the only team members who are not professional educators, often lack knowledge about special education, the specific details of the child's handicapping condition, and the procedures employed by the school district. This lack of knowledge not only hampers their ability to contribute to the IEP meeting, but also may affect their perceptions of themselves as effective participants in the process. In order to obtain meaningful parental participation in the IEP process, educators must learn to be supportive of those parents who do participate and must try to encourage reluctant parents to become involved.

- Parents need to be convinced of the value of their participation.
- Educators should become sensitized to parents' inability to deal with professional jargon and overwhelming amounts of test data.
- Parents need to be educated regarding their child's handicapping condition and his or her needs and potential abilities, as well as how they can reinforce at home what is being taught at school.
- New ways must be found to make parental participation logistically possible and nonthreatening. Informal ("social") meetings and visits to the home, with appropriate time or financial compensation for school personnel are possible solutions.

Although most educators believe that parental participation can be invaluable, many of them also believe that those parents who are interested

in their child's education are already involved and that the existence of a federal law that merely formalizes the IEP process will in no way change the attitude of those parents who do not wish to participate. These respondents believe that the parental participation aspect of the IEP requirements will work well for parents who are truly committed to obtaining a better education for their handicapped child, but will not change the attitudes or behavior of apathetic parents.

One respondent suggested that a possible solution to the nonparticipating parent problem might be to provide the child with a "case manager" to oversee the design and implementation of the educational program. Such a person would provide the main input in the planning sessions and would be responsible for monitoring the program on a continuing basis. The suggestion of the Alabama panelists of providing informed "parent advocates" to accompany insecure or uninformed parents to the IEP meetings should also be explored.

Past experience has illustrated the difficulties inherent in obtaining parental participation in many instances. It has been necessary for some individual teachers and administrators to commit personal and/or instructional time to contacting parents who, for a variety of reasons, do not tend to take an active part in their child's education. Increasingly, teachers point out that extensive efforts to involve reluctant parents reduce time available for instructional planning. Thus, it is necessary to find ways to comply with mandated notification and consent procedures without placing an undue hardship on educational personnel or impinging upon valuable instructional time.

The formalized IEP process is a new tool, and since the document itself can provide a structure and point of reference from which educators

can talk to parents, it should be utilized at least partly as a means for learning more about the child and for increasing the level of communication with the parent. In addition, the value of increasing the parents' insight into the local educational system, increasing their understanding of the child's handicapping condition, and increasing their commitment to obtaining an appropriate education for the handicapped child, all spin-offs of participating in the IEP process, should not be overlooked.

Teacher Roles

The intent of the IEP component of PL 94-142 is to increase the quality of education available to handicapped children. However, many educators are concerned that the quality of educational services may actually decrease as a result of the law's potential effect on both the teachers' roles and the teacher/pupil relationship.

Although many special education teachers in Alabama individualized instruction for their handicapped students before the passage of PL 94-142, they were not required to do so by the Exceptional Child Act, and many special and most regular teachers feel that the IEP requirements of PL 94-142 will have a significant impact on their activities and responsibilities. While the law does not specify the role of the teacher in the IEP process (other than requiring the teacher's attendance at the IEP conference), many educators believe that the special teacher will assume the primary role of writing the IEP while relying on input from other participating personnel. Both special and regular teachers expressed several major concerns relating to anticipated changes in responsibility.

Summary of Reactions to the IEP Requirements of PL 94-142

Increased Demands

Depending upon how PL 94-142 is implemented in Alabama, the teachers' responsibilities will likely include:

- increased clerical and administrative duties;
- documentation of educational plans beyond their usefulness to the teacher as an instructional tool;
- attendance at IEP planning meetings;
- development of long- and short-term goals and objectives for handicapped children;
- involvement in parental notification and consent procedures;
- increased participation in a "paper process" rather than in actual instruction;
- administering an increasing number of standardized tests; and
- increased responsibility for coping with handicapped children. placed in regular classes.

Need for Further Training

Teachers feel they need training for tasks either required by, or implied as necessary to, the IEP process such as:

- how to observe children and record these observations in order to judge whether goals and objectives are being reached (particularly true of regular teachers);
- how to identify and define short- and long-term behavioral goals and objectives;
- how to perform assessments;
- how to write, or participate in writing, IEPs; and
- how to deal effectively with parents.

Effects on Morale and Interstaff Relationships

- Increased noninstructional tasks may contribute to a decline in teachers' morale.

- Regular teachers morale may be affected by the additional problems created by having handicapped children in their classes.
- The relationship between special and regular teachers might become more strained or it might be facilitated by the closer contact necessary under PL 94-142.

Increased Demands

Both special and regular teachers expressed concern that their roles and responsibilities will change as a result of their involvement in the IEP process. They believe that as a result of these changes handicapped children will receive less teacher-directed instruction than they previously did.

Many special teachers stated that they have been individualizing instruction for their handicapped children for some time and resent what they consider to be "add-on" responsibilities which do not involve direct instruction. They believe new responsibilities emerging from implementing the IEP requirements of PL 94-142 will force them to devote time which was previously used for teaching and planning to meeting the formal requirements of the law. To compensate for these increased responsibilities, teachers feel that they may need to use personal time for school-related activities. Some of them pointed out that the existence of a piece of paper that meets the requirements of the law in no way guarantees a child a better education. Many of the teachers who expressed this belief also feel that the law focuses on procedure rather than on instruction, and that some of the tasks which they feel will be relegated to them are inappropriate, considering their training and traditional role in the educational system. While recognizing the need for parental involvement, due process, and record-keeping, these teachers resent the implication that they lack

dedication if they are not willing to devote their own personal time, with or without financial compensation, to these tasks.

Although the law does not specifically state that the regular classroom teacher is to be involved in the IEP process, it seems reasonable to expect that if the handicapped child is to spend time in a regular classroom, that teacher should have knowledge about the child and a voice in the design of his or her educational program. However, many regular education teachers are concerned about the additional responsibilities of participating in the IEP process and of having handicapped students in their classrooms. They feel that their classrooms already have too many students in them and that adding handicapped students will take time away from the regular students they have been hired to teach.

Need for Further Training

Both regular and special teachers indicated a need for state-wide in-service training. They feel that such training is needed to prepare them for participation in IEP meetings and writing IEPs. Although special teachers have had varied exposure to writing short-term objectives, they feel a need for further training in matching objectives to the individual handicapped child. Regular teachers voiced a similar concern. Special teachers were also concerned about the need for additional training related to performing informal assessment and dealing effectively with parents. Although a few teachers felt prepared to perform in a new and/or expanded role in the IEP process, many were apprehensive and resentful about the possibility of being required to participate in a process without having had appropriate training.

Most regular teachers expressed the belief that some of the responsibilities they expect to incur as a result of PL 94-142 are unrelated to the teaching profession for which they have been trained. These teachers feel that they have been trained and hired to teach children, not to organize meetings, contact parents, and fill out forms. As one teacher said, "The teacher will become a clerical aide rather than... an instructor. The child will suffer."

Effects on Morale and Interstaff Relationships

Many educators expressed a concern that the IEP mandates requiring teachers to perform noninstructional duties would result in lost teaching and personal time and would create a decline in both staff morale and services to children. Regular teachers expect to have additional problems which may contribute to a decline in morale. Their classrooms are already overloaded and they feel that adding students who need special help is unfair. This feeling of unfairness is increased because, unlike special teachers, they have generally had little, if any, training in how to relate to or teach handicapped children. It was also felt that participation in the process might put additional pressure on the relationships between regular and special teachers. However, many respondents expressed the opinion that regular and special education personnel must begin to communicate more effectively and that implementation of the IEP may facilitate this process.

Summary and Suggestions

Major concerns of teachers are that:

- they will be forced to devote excessive amounts of time to noninstructional activities, resulting in lost planning, teaching, and personal time with a subsequent decline in staff morale and instructional time to children;

- They will need additional special training in order to become effective members or leaders of IEP teams and, in some cases, to implement the IEP once it is written;
- The implementation of the IEP process will put additional pressure on the relationships between regular and special education personnel.

Administrators will have to find ways in which teachers can be provided with the time they need to meet their increased responsibilities. Possible solutions include providing free time during the school day, providing appropriate compensation for after-hours work; providing additional support personnel to assist with noninstructional duties such as assessments and clerical and administrative tasks; designing forms that reduce paperwork to an absolute minimum; utilizing various types of specialists such as art or music teachers to take over classrooms when IEP-related work is required during the school day; putting teachers on 12-month contracts to provide time to work on IEPs; developing time-saving procedures such as having a few members of the IEP committee develop the educational plan and then having it approved by the full committee; and demonstrating that although the IEP will be time consuming at first, it will, hopefully, over time, cut down on the time required to develop daily lesson plans.

Training should be undertaken to assure that teachers will have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the IEP requirements. Reciprocal arrangements between local districts or between universities and local districts should be considered, as should additional technical assistance from the state or federal government. It is also important that the problems which regular teachers will encounter as they take more responsibility for the education of handicapped children be recognized and dealt with. For example, providing these teachers with

classroom aides would significantly expand the teachers' ability to interact with children on an individual basis. In addition, training programs at the preservice level should seek to erase or minimize the existing dichotomy between regular and special education by including some special education coursework in the regular teaching curriculum. Another possibility would be to provide in-service training to regular and special teachers together so they can share their concerns and come to a better understanding of differing points of view.

Finally, the positive results of IEP implementation that have already come to light should be emphasized. For example, one administrator stated that she has already used the IEPs in her school to document the need for new types of services and programs. In addition, she noted that the IEP provides continuity when the child moves from one school, locality, or state to another. Thus, the IEP should be viewed as a problem-solving tool which heretofore has not been available to teachers, parents, children, and administrators.

Administrator Roles

Although the Alabama Exceptional Child Act does not specify the role of the school administrators, they have sometimes acted as catalysts for obtaining needed services for handicapped children. Thus, the local school administrator is seen as a critical figure in the implementation of the IEP requirements of PL 94-142.

Summary of Reactions to the IEP Component of PL 94-142

- It was agreed that the administrator would have a critical role in implementing PL 94-142.
- Concern was expressed that the administrator would be unable to provide services because of inadequate resources.

Local school administrators in Alabama are viewed to be in a position to influence the attitudes and behavior of other participants in the IEP process, particularly those of teachers and parents. They can provide support and encouragement to teachers and can encourage increased contact with parents. They can also engage in IEP-related public relations work in which they can assure school personnel, parents, children, and the public that the school system is actively attempting to provide handicapped children with an appropriate public education. In addition, administrators are in the best position to know about the educational resources available in the locality and the state and can coordinate the delivery of services. They will need to be involved in providing opportunities for in-service training for all types of personnel, providing time to teachers for IEP-related work (or providing compensation for overtime work), and making ancillary services and support personnel available. They also can demonstrate the need for additional funding. Finally, administrators will serve as monitors of the IEP process, making sure that required services are delivered.

Respondents were concerned that administrators would be hampered in performing these important functions because of an inadequacy of resources.

One comment heard often was that even if personnel and material resources are increased in response to PL 94-142, existing space limitations in districts are not quickly or easily remedied.

Summary and Suggestions

In spite of limited resources, administrators will have many important functions in implementing the IEP requirements of PL 94-142. Although some of these responsibilities are not new ones, most respondents agreed that administrators would benefit from training designed to help them perform these tasks efficiently in the new context of the IEP requirements. For example, in order to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the IEP, administrators will have to be knowledgeable about the law and the long- and short-range implications it holds for the school system. Resources and services prescribed in each IEP will have to be located and obtained, effective monitoring will have to be instituted, and an increasing amount of red tape, paper work, and administrative detail will have to be dealt with.

Most administrators agree, however, that there are benefits to be reaped as well as problems to be overcome. For example, it has been shown that the IEP can be effectively used to document the need for funds, services, and facilities and for allocating existing resources within a particular district or across the state. Hopefully, the IEP will also contribute to better rapport between the school system and parents and provide the administrator with better knowledge of various school programs and community and state agencies which can assist in providing educational services to handicapped children.

Local, State, and Federal Relationships

The Alabama State Department of Education has monitored local education programs for handicapped children by conducting site visits, making suggestions for improvements, and occasionally, requiring significant changes if a locality is to continue receiving state funds. The IEP requirements of PL 94-142 are perceived as giving the state education agency (SEA) additional regulatory influence which will enable them to improve their current monitoring and procedures.

Because PL 94-142 places a great deal of emphasis on monitoring, due process, and other regulatory procedures, it is expected to have a significant impact on the relationships between federal, state, and local government agencies. Traditional types of interaction such as consultative and technical assistance provided by the SEA and the federal government will now be accompanied by increased regulation and monitoring.

Summary of Reactions to the IEP Requirements of PL 94-142

Respect for State and Local Autonomy

- There is some resentment over the fact that federal officials may be in the position of "telling us what to do when they don't know what we need."

Standardization

- Many teachers and administrators believe that some baseline level of standardization of IEP roles, forms, and procedures should be established either at the state or federal level.

Federal Provision of Funds

- It is a matter of some concern that with more federal funds for education of handicapped children will come increased federal intervention and control.

Respect for State and Local Autonomy

Although the respondents recognized and approved of the intent of PL 94-142 -- which is to provide a better education for handicapped children -- there was some concern expressed over what kind and amount of federal and state intervention and control is appropriate in implementing the law. Some of the concern expressed about monitoring by an external agency may stem from a lack of differentiation between student program review and procedural monitoring. While student program review refers to the specific content of an IEP document and its appropriateness for a particular child, procedural monitoring focuses on the IEP process. Most respondents felt that student program review should be primarily the responsibility of local education agencies, since those closest to the child are in the best position to determine the appropriateness of a particular program. However, there was little agreement concerning what agency should be responsible for procedural monitoring. Respondents suggested that the localities, the state, the federal government, or a combination of these agencies should assume this responsibility.

There was general agreement, however, that any external monitoring should be undertaken in a tactful and nonthreatening manner. For example, one SEA employee suggested that monitoring should take the form of assisting the locality to achieve compliance with the law rather than the form of "checking up to see if the locality is in compliance." In addition, respondents pointed out that monitoring agencies must realize that many districts will reach compliance only by means of successive approximation over a period of time.

Standardization

Some respondents were afraid that the minimum standards established by PL 94-142 would in some localities be interpreted as all that is necessary and while the letter of the law might be met, its spirit would not. They cited the dichotomy between mere compliance and what they considered to be a more active commitment to bettering the education of handicapped children. Related to this issue is the additional concern that many people have about whether standards developed outside a particular location will be sufficiently flexible and appropriate to local needs and conditions.

It was the belief of the Forum Panel that the SEA should be responsible for determining roles of participants, developing appropriate forms, and establishing operating procedures, all of which would be subject to modification by the local education agencies (LEAs) with the approval of the SEA. This would presumably ease teachers' workloads and facilitate monitoring and transfer of students, and also assure compliance with the law. Another suggestion was that either the federal or state government could provide basic policy and procedural guidelines which would bring the districts into compliance with the law, while allowing the different localities to embellish upon these policies and procedures in order to meet local needs and circumstances. The panel felt that either of these approaches would allow for creativity and flexibility at the local level while assuring that the LEA would meet the minimum requirements of the law. An added benefit to either approach would be that any quantitative data gathered by the localities would then meet their own needs as well as the needs of the state and federal governments.

Federal Provision of Funds

Educators in Alabama feel that the law does not provide sufficient funds for implementation of the law and believe that total compliance will be impossible without additional finacial assistance. They point out that funds are needed for in-service training of all types of educational personnel, facilities, release and/or compensatory time for teachers, and hiring ancilliary personnel such as diagnosticians, physical therapists, classroom aides, and clerical workers.

There is little belief in the state that people in Washington are aware of or sympathetic to serious problems that will make compliance with the law difficult to achieve immediately. Related to this concern is the growing awareness that the acquisition of federal funds is tied to compliance with the law. People feel as if they are caught in a double bind; they do not have the resources to fulfill the demands of the law, yet if they do not meet these demands, they become ineligible to receive federal funds. Although most people in the state feel the need for some guidance in implementing the law, few are enthusiastic about the idea of increased federal control over either their jobs or the education of their children.

Summary and Suggestions

In summary, while the respondents are obviously committed to the ideals of PL 94-142, they feel that there are a number of obstacles to the immediate successful implementation of the law. They want implementation of the law to proceed slowly and cautiously, with everyone concerned planning and evaluating progress as they go along. Creative solutions to new problems will be required. For example, in order to spread the

available professional expertise within the state as far as possible, several respondents from university settings suggested that further investigation should be made into interstate or reciprocal arrangements between local universities and school systems. Such arrangements could include exchanging technical and consultative assistance for increased opportunities for student teacher field work in the local school system.

Respondents at the local and state level stated that those providing assistance to the LEAs must be cognizant of the problems involved and must take these problems into account when monitoring and evaluating programs. In addition, the federal and state governments must stress the "partnership" aspect of the new relationship and provide substantive support while demanding greater accountability.

PROJECT IEP: PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

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Panel Recommendations

General Recommendations concerning State and Local Responsibilities

- The LEA should determine the persons involved in the IEP process and the roles that they should play, subject to the approval of the SEA. The LEA is more aware of local resources, and allowing local discretion would encourage creativity and flexibility. Allowance for local discretion would also promote better morale at the local level.

- The SEA should state the requirements of the law and provide consultative support to the LEAs as they develop local procedures. The local procedures should be subject to the approval of the SEA. The relationship would assure that the LEAs would meet the minimum requirements of the law as interpreted by the SEA; it would assure LEAs a reasonable level of flexibility in developing implementation procedures.

- The SEA should determine minimum standards for procedures and forms. The LEAs should then adopt and/or develop these procedures and forms, subject to approval by the SEA. Local needs will vary. SEA standards would aid in monitoring and would provide for mobility of students and teachers, would contribute to a consistent and orderly system, would aid in pre- and in-service training; would document services and needs, would assure compliance with the law, would promote communication among all involved, and would reduce or eliminate duplication.

Specific Recommendations to Assure Positive Consequences of IEP Implementation

- Appropriate and comprehensive pre- and in-service training should be based on local input.
- Training should be provided for parents.
- Techniques to stimulate positive attitudes should be provided.
- The possibility of providing diagnostic testing services should be examined.
- Time should be provided during the school day for all aspects of IEP implementation.
- An attempt should be made to provide additional funding to reduce the teacher/pupil ratio.
- An attempt should be made to provide ancillary services and support personnel.
- Work should be started toward developing a diagnostic/prescriptive type curriculum, including developing additional materials.
- The total staff should be involved in planning and implementing the IEP process.
- Associate and regional learning resource centers, diagnostic centers, and teacher centers should be utilized.
- Cooperative programs which include provisions for transportation should be developed for low incidence exceptional students.

- Parents should be accompanied by an advocate during the IEP conference if they so desire.
- Individual schools should work with the LEA in determining roles, procedures and forms.
- Monitoring should include all persons in the IEP process.
- Differentiation should be made between the IEP committee and the admission, review, and dismissal committee.

Specific Recommendations to Minimize Negative Consequences of IEP Implementation

- Unrealistic demands should not be put on teachers and other educational personnel.
- Necessary funds should be provided.
- Paperwork should be minimized.
- Unnecessary testing should be avoided.
- All personnel should be familiarized with the process of monitoring and other aspects of IEP implementation.
- Public awareness activities should be encouraged to broaden understanding of PL 94-142, particularly its IEP requirements.
- Sensitivity and versatility should be developed in working with parents.
- Communication should be improved among all persons involved in the IEP process.
- Activities undertaken in response to the law should reflect consideration for all children.
- Adequate training should be given to all educational personnel.